



Newsletter of the
Chattanooga Hiking Club

August 2023

Be a Weekend Hike Leader!

The Chattanooga area is rich with trails ready to explore! Members, both new and old, are encouraged to volunteer to lead hikes. The club needs hike leaders willing to lead nearby hikes that are 5 to 8 miles. Weekend hikes of that distance can be scheduled for either Saturday or Sunday. These can be planned in advance or decided just a few days before and offered as pop-up outings. Contact Susan Faidley at susanf.chchiker@gmail.com for more details.

Volunteer Opportunities



Lula Lake Land Trust can use volunteers for numerous projects and activities. Recently LLLT has begun re-treating Hemlock trees on their properties. Our Maintenance Coordinator reports that they could probably use one to two people on these treatment days. The work is moderately strenuous, and includes walking through the woods in a designated grid carrying tools and gear. If you are interested in helping out and giving back to the community, please reach out to them at the above address.

Another worthwhile opportunity for volunteers is the Benton Mackaye Trail Association. They have numerous opportunities for volunteers and can especially utilize folks interested in monthly trail maintenance activities. See the following for more information: <https://bmta.org/volunteer>.

Making

TRACKS



Upcoming Outings at a Glance

Wednesday, August 9: Mabbitt Springs/Falling Water

Miles: ~4

Elevation gain: Fairly level

Contact Debbie Lambert at debs4587@comcast.net.

Sunday, August 20: Cloudland Canyon State Park

Trail: Bear Creek Backcountry Trail

Miles: 7.3

Elevation gain: 1300'

Contact Jenny Hopkins at jenhop60@gmail.com.

Wednesday, August 23: Hiwassee Float Trip and Picnic

Join us for this annual picnic and float trip down the Hiwassee River! For more information and to sign up, email Barbara McCollum at bpmccollum@yahoo.com.

Saturday, August 26: GSMNP

Trail: Mount Cammerer

Miles: 11

Elevation gain: 3,000'

Contact Susan Faidley at susanf.chchiker@gmail.com.

Saturday, September 16: GSMNP

Trail: Mount LeConte

Miles: 11 to 14 TBD

Elevation gain: 3000 to 4000'

Contact Susan Faidley at susanf.chchiker@gmail.com.



Website: www.chatthiking.com
Facebook: Chattanooga Hiking Club

Reports from the Field

Wednesday, July 12

Raccoon Mountain

Today's Wednesday hike was to Raccoon Mountain and focused on the trails surrounding the picnic area. This easy five-miler was adjusted in anticipation of hot temperatures, although the weather turned out to be comfortable and several hikers decided to proceed on for another 2.5 miles!



Accompanying the leader, John Prescott, were Joyce Campbell and her 12-year-old grandson, Everest, Joe Teringer, Carylon Cooper, April Priest, and Donna Kitsmiller. There were several wonderful overlooks of the Tennessee River, including the Visitor Center view and the East Overlook toward downtown Chattanooga.

Sunday, July 16

Moonshine Trails

The ongoing summer heat and humidity didn't deter four members from a Sunday morning hike at the Moonshine Trails on Lookout. The area includes a variety of rock formations, foliage, and scenic and shaded streamside trails. Thanks to Jenny for leading this hike!



Reports from the Field

Sunday, July 22

Gahuti Trail

After rescheduling the Spence Field hike to later in the season, hike leader Susan Faidley suggested a closer venue for four members that were willing to endure an especially muggy morning trek. We ventured south to Fort



Mountain State Park. The 8+-mile Gahuti loop offered a challenging series of ups and downs with more than 1,500 feet elevation change. The scenic views were obstructed by an early morning fog, but as the group wound around the mountain the fog lifted. Those enjoying a strenuous summer outing included John Prescott, Chris Bresson, Steve Barnes, and leader, Susan Faidley.

Wednesday, June 26

Little Cedar Mountain

Several hikers turned out to visit the nearby trail that loops around a small peninsula on Nickajack Lake. Hikers enjoyed rock formations and lakeside views. A missed turn by the hike leader added an extra 20 minutes to this easy 3+-mile loop, all enjoyed a pleasant morning walk. Hikers included Suzanne Dorough, Wayne Chambers, Charlie Breeding, Dan Ryan, Tom Long and, and guest Mike Hardemann. Steve Barnes reporting.



<h2 style="text-align: center;">Upcoming Outings</h2>

Wednesday, August 9**Mabbit Springs/Falling Water****Location:** Signal Mountain**Driving Time:** 20 minutes from downtown**Distance:** 4 miles**Rating:** Easy**Elevation Gain:** Minimal**Pace:** Standard (about 2 mph)

This is an out and back hike, easy to moderate, about two miles out with little elevation change. It's a shaded, woodland trail along Falling Water Creek. Pleasant walking with distant views at the falls off the escarpment. Please email Debbie Lambert at: debs4587@comcast.net for more details and to register.

Sunday, August 20**Bear Creek Backcountry Loop****Location:** Cloudland Canyon State Park**Driving Time:** 30 minutes from downtown**Distance:** 7.3 miles**Rating:** Moderately strenuous**Elevation Change:** 1300'**Pace:** Standard

After a short but somewhat steep descent to Bear Creek, one of the most beautiful spots in Cloudland Canyon, we'll cross the creek, continue up the other side, and take the 3.5 mile loop portion counterclockwise, then again cross Bear Creek. Water shoes will be helpful in case of high water. Poles are recommended. Please email Jenny Hopkins at jenhop60@gmail.com to register and get details (time, location, etc.).

Wednesday, August 23, 2023**Hiwassee River Float Trip and Picnic****Location:** Reliance, Tennessee**Driving Time:** About 1 hour from downtown**Rain date:** August 30

Join us for our annual float trip and picnic! We'll reserve duckies from Webb Brother's Rafting. After the float, enjoy a potluck picnic. See the website for additional details. Barbara McCollum (bpmccollum@yahoo.com) is organizing this event, so contact her for more information.

Note: For those who don't wish to paddle, Barbara is looking for someone to lead a short hike from the picnic area. As the date gets closer, Barbara will email club members with a list of reservations and food items.

Saturday, August 26**Mount Cammerer****Location:** GSMNP**Driving Time:** 2.5 hours**Distance:** 11 miles**Rating:** Strenuous**Elevation gain:** 3,000'**Pace:** Standard (about 2 mph)

Trail Conditions: Some rocks, but mostly good trail
This is a beautiful hike starting on the Low Gap Trail from the Cosby Campground, and then following the Appalachian Trail to the side trail for Mt Cammerer. At almost 5,000 ft, the tower here provides for outstanding 360 degree views. With a clear day, this is one of those "crown jewel" hikes of the Smokies. And if the day is not so clear, we still get a beautiful, steep and challenging climb for three miles up the Low Gap Trail, and then enjoy a somewhat easier two miles along the famed Appalachian Trail. There are overlooks along the way. The tower is a wonderful stone structure (built by the CCC) making it easy to get onto the platform - no scary 100 rickety steps to climb. Mt Cammerer is named after a national park director who was instrumental in establishing the Smokies as a national park. This is a difficult climb, and while we will have rest stops and will not hike at a fast pace, participants need to have experience with similar mileage and elevation gain. To register contact Susan Faidley at susanf.chchiker@gmail.com.

Saturday, September 16**Mount LeConte****Location:** GSMNP**Driving Time:** 3 hours**Distance:** 11-13.5 Miles depending on route**Rating:** Strenuous to Very Strenuous**Elevation Gain:** 3000 to 4000 feet

Mt. LeConte is considered to be the crown jewel of the Smokies! This is a very strenuous hike for which hikers need to be prepared for a full day of hiking. Our route is TBD but likely it will be the Alum Cave Trail or up Rainbow Falls and down Bullhead Trail. This trip will require spending the night before in the Gatlinburg area, so that we can get an early start. This hike is for members only and previous experience with mileage and elevation gain is necessary. If you are interested email Susan Faidley at susanf.chchiker@gmail.com to register and get details (time, hotel plans, etc.).

Members on the Move

Members on the Move isn't always about far-flung travels. This is a tale of trials and tribulations from a recent backpack as submitted by Chris "Happy" Bresson (with minor revisions) after his June adventure on the AT. Hope you enjoy!

Georgia AT Misadventure

I began the backpack at Unicoi Gap at 8 a.m. on Tuesday morning, after spending the night in my car at the Deep Gap trailhead. Slight mist was in the air and rain was falling off the trees caused by the wind. The hike was uneventful up to the Tray Mountain Shelter, albeit a bit slippery. I arrived around 11 a.m., and ate my lunch. The sun actually broke through for a few minutes, which gave me hope for the day. Starting down the trail, I headed for Addis Gap. Almost a mile into this section, it started to rain. Not a big problem, as I expected a little rain. What I did not expect the monsoon that hit. It turned the trail into a river, and soaked me through and through. It rained pretty much non-stop until I exited the trail at Dick's Creek Gap the next day. (It even hailed a bit up on the mountain.) The temperature dropped to the low 60s or high 50s, which gave me a little concern about the possibility of hypothermia, but as long as I kept moving I was staying warm. The footing was treacherous and downhill were worse than the uphill. I nearly fell a few times. Thank God for trekking poles. Needless to say it was slow going but I made it to Sassafras Gap around 4:30 or 5 p.m. with a little over a mile remaining to make it to Addis, which was my original goal. Starting towards Addis I got a crippling cramp in my right inner thigh. I literally hobbled back to Sassafras Gap and almost ended up crawling but I did find a log to rest on and massage out the cramp. (BTW, it was still raining through all of this.) So I decided that the hiking gods didn't want me to travel further and proceeded to set up camp at Sassafras Gap. The only problem was all the campsites were flooded. I found one that was slightly tilted and set up my tent in the wind and rain. I think it was a new record in setting up a tent. I thought the fishing might be good as well.

I was getting pretty hungry by then, and made a trail meal. My jetboil worked well and the meal tasted great even though it was watered down. By that time, I would have eaten a bug. I cleaned up and thought to put my trash in my bear bag and find a good tree to suspend it. That was easier said than done, as it took me over an hour to find a good tree and suspend the bag. There were more than a few attempts to get it hung right. The major problem was untangling the cord from all the bushes after each errant throw. Actually, I was about to give up and leave it for the bears

when I finally connected. Afterwards, I made it back to my tent and then started the long process of trying to get in the tent without dragging all the water, mud, and duff back into the tent. This was indeed a struggle, but I got into the tent, rolled around in order to take off anything that was wet. Think of a caterpillar pupating. Definitely quite a struggle and not a pretty picture. I unrolled my sleeping pad, inflated it, then unrolled the sleeping bag and got in. It was getting dark early as the rain and wind had picked up. The evening started out very comfortable, but then I noticed my back was getting cold and wasn't quite as comfortable as before. Oh \$#%@! my pad was deflating. I crawled out of my sleeping bag and examined the pad with my headlamp. I found a little hole in the bottom middle of the pad. Being the savvy backpacker that I am, I was able to repair the leak using Tenacious Tape and re-inflated the pad settling back in.

It was a dark and stormy night. The rain pelted the rain fly and the wind was relentless. Lightning would flash, lighting up the tent. The rain hitting the fly was loud, like the rain hitting a metal roof, only right next to my head. I did not get much sleep, mostly because I had to go to the bathroom, but thought I could wait until the rain let up. The only problem was the rain wouldn't let up. Sometime around 4:30 a.m., I thought I was going to burst and decided to brave the storm, rather than risk a burst bladder. I returned to the tent and towed off with my Sham, which worked great, as they are very light and wring out almost dry. I also used it to sop up any water inside.

I caught a cat nap after that and woke around 6 a.m.. At that point I was praying to please, please, make it quit raining. It didn't, so I decided that I was not going to make it back to my car at the Deep Gap trailhead. I consulted the AT trail guide and determined that my best exit was Dick's Creek. There was a hostel about half mile to the west, which became my new goal. I got dressed in my only spare shirt, underwear, and socks then threw on my rain pants and rain jacket, and broke camp in the rain. Everything was thoroughly soaked. It took better than an hour to pack up. The only thing I managed to keep dry was my sleeping bag and when I lifted the pack, it felt like someone had stuck a few bricks in it. When I began my pack weighed about 28 pounds, including food and water. Well it had to be at least 40 pounds at this point due to all the water absorbed by the tent, ground cloth, wet clothes, etc. I tried to wring out the clothes, but the effort was futile in the rain the food load hadn't changed much since I hadn't found a good place to sit, rest a little, and eat.

Members on the Move

Georgia AT Misadventure (cont'd.)

Onward ! I headed to Addis Gap and proceeded up towards Kelly's Knob. Holy smacks !#@%\$! The climb would have been difficult on a good day. Climbing up the mountain in the rain with a river coming down the trail took me almost an hour to the top and close to the same coming down the other side. Again, the rain never stopped and the trail was more slippery than a greased pig, but I did survive. Well, to shorten the story, I finally made it to Dick's Creek around 2:30 p.m.



From there it was a half mile west to get to Around the Bend Hostel. As luck would have it, It was closed#@%\$!The gate was open so I decided I would beat on the door and see if anyone was around. Well, lo and behold, an angel appeared whose name was Nimrod. He didn't have wings, but a long beard and tie-dyed shorts. When he told me the hostel was closed I fell to my knees and cried. He took pity upon me, made a cup of coffee, and gave me a place to sit on the porch where we talked about hiking. He explained that the owners had gone on vacation and he was to look after the place while they were gone. He gave me a few shuttle service numbers that could drive me back to my car and a Wifi password to use. After a few calls, I finally found a shuttle service that would take a credit card. It was Mary - the same driver we had used on a previous section hike. She was a good hour away but said she could head right over. I was cold, wet, and I just wanted to get back to my car. Well to finish this story, she took me back to my car at Deep Gap and I returned home....There's no place like home, ain't that right Dorothy. Still "Happy"Just not quite as happy as before this hike.

Tips for the Trails

As a reminder, below are some safety tips to consider while hiking on club hikes. These are intended to keep you safe while hiking.

- Safety is of prime concern. Each hiker is responsible for themselves and for following directions from hike leaders.
- Hike leaders should always carry a first-aid kit.
- Inform the hike leader of any existing medical conditions that might affect your ability to complete the hike.
- Dress for the weather as well as the terrain with appropriate clothing and footwear. Be prepared for changing weather conditions.
- Bring plenty of water to ensure you are hydrated. For longer hikes, hiker-friendly snacks are also recommended.
- We normally hike as a group. Hikers should remain behind the leader and in front of the sweep. Exceptions will be necessary on occasion. Let the leader know if you plan to take a bio-break.
- A group should always stop and wait for all hikers to arrive before proceeding at trail intersections.
- Always be aware of the hiker behind you. If you don't see the hiker behind you, stop and advise the leader.

Club Officers and Support

President - Stormy McGauley

Vice President - Tony Morales

Treasurer - Jenny Hopkins

Secretary - Susan Basch

Membership Database - Susan Basch

Weekend Outings - Susan Faidley

Midweek Outings - Cheryl Carico

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Webmaster - Renaud Courbiere, Christianne Montoya